



# PRESS RELEASE

## U.S. EMBASSY RANGOON

110 University Avenue, Kamayut Township, Rangoon, Burma

### **U.S. Embassy Sends Eight Religious and Civil Society Leaders on Tolerance and Diversity Exchange Program**

Yangon – On August 8, U.S. Ambassador Derek Mitchell met with a group of religious and civil society leaders selected to participate in a three-week International Visitor Leadership Program (IVLP) exchange in the United States entitled “Tolerance and Diversity in a Multiethnic Society.” The eight participants will spend three weeks in the United States, from August 10 to August 30, to learn more about diversity and tolerance in the United States and the vital role that local and community leaders play in developing proactive and positive methods to address ethnic or religious differences.

The exchange program will include stops in Washington, D.C., Boston, New Orleans, and Los Angeles, and visits to the U.S. Department of Justice, George Mason University School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution, Cambridge Human Right Commission, among other places. The participants were selected based on the important leadership role they play in their religious and civic communities.

During the program, participants will:

- Investigate how the United States ensures that tolerance is encouraged, taught, and supported in educational, cultural, and religious arenas, and how cooperation and support for diversity create a more inclusive and productive society;
- Examine methods of conflict resolution and mediation initiatives in multi-ethnic and religiously diverse communities; and
- Gain a better understanding of public and private organizations currently active in promoting peace, reconciliation, and better mutual understanding.

The project builds on several initiatives by the Embassy to work with the Myanmar government and civil society groups on promoting respect for the diverse cultures and religions.

The IVLP program is supported by the Department of State’s Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs (ECA).

Participants include Abu Tahay, Chairman, Union Nationals Development Party; Myint Swe, President, Ratana Metta Organization, Venaya Nogaha Association (Buddhist) Religions for Peace; Sundara, Chief Monk, International Buddhist Education Centre, Sagaing; Oo Hla Saw, General Secretary, Rakhine Nationalities Development Party; Aye Lwin, Chief Convener, The Islamic Centre of Myanmar; Zor Ti Ka, Headmaster, Buddhist Teaching Organization; Thet Swe Win, Program Director, Myanmar Youth Empowerment Program/Campaign Coordinator, Pray for Myanmar; and Gun Tang, General Secretary, Kutkai Kachin Baptist Association.

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